

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for communicating electronic data in a manner that identifies a sender, the method comprising:

receiving electronic data at an intermediary located between a sender and an intended recipient of the electronic data;

5 identifying the sender at the intermediary;

changing the electronic data to reflect information identifying the sender based on the identifying performed at the intermediary; and

forwarding at least a selected portion of the changed electronic data to the intended recipient.

10 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the sender is not a host.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein information identifying the sender comprises at least an Internet Protocol address.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein information identifying the sender comprises more than an Internet Protocol address.

15 5. The method of claim 1 wherein information identifying the sender comprises a screen name.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein information identifying the sender comprises account information.

20 7. The method of claim 1 wherein information identifying the sender comprises information identifying a person.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the intermediary comprises a layer 4 redirection program.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein identifying the sender at the intermediary comprises identifying the sender based upon a data packet.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein receiving electronic data includes receiving an electronic mail message.

5 11. The method of claim 1 wherein identifying the sender comprises:
determining an address from which the electronic data is received; and
determining an identifier for the sender based on the address from which the
electronic data is received,
wherein the information includes the identifier such that the forwarding comprises
10 forwarding the electronic data along with the identifier for the sender.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein determining the address includes determining an Internet protocol address.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein determining the identifier includes determining a user-defined identifier based on the address from which the electronic data is received.

15 14. The method of claim 13 wherein the user-defined identifier comprises a screen name corresponding to the sender.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein:
changing the electronic data comprises appending to the electronic data the
information identifying the sender; and
20 forwarding the changed electronic data comprises forwarding the electronic data
along with the appended information.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein appending the information identifying the sender includes appending the information identifying the sender as a header to the electronic data.

17. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
determining whether the electronic data received from the sender has characteristics
of a message to be blocked;

blocking the electronic data when the electronic data is determined to have
5 characteristics of a message to be blocked; and
wherein forwarding at least a selected portion of the changed electronic data
comprises forwarding the changed electronic data that is not determined to have
characteristics of a message to be blocked.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein determining whether the electronic data has
10 characteristics of a message to be blocked comprises determining whether the electronic data
has characteristics of a message to be blocked using a level 4 redirection program.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein determining whether the electronic data has
characteristics of a message to be blocked comprises determining whether the electronic data
has characteristics of a message to be blocked based upon a data packet.

20. The method of claim 17 wherein determining whether the electronic data has
15 characteristics of a message to be blocked comprises determining whether the electronic data
has characteristics of a message to be blocked based upon the identification of the sender.

21. The method of claim 17 wherein blocking the electronic data comprises blocking the
electronic data using level 4 redirection program.

22. The method of claim 17 wherein blocking the electronic data comprises blocking the
20 electronic data based upon a data packet.

23. The method of claim 17 wherein blocking the electronic data comprises blocking the
electronic based upon the identification of the sender.

24. The method of claim 17 wherein determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of a message to be blocked comprises determining whether the electronic data relates to undesirable news postings such that electronic data having characteristics of undesirable news postings is blocked.

5 25. The method of claim 17 wherein determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of a message to be blocked comprises determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of spam such that electronic data having characteristics of spam is blocked.

10 26. The method of claim 25 wherein determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of spam comprises:
counting a number of connections that are open with the sender; and
determining that the electronic data has characteristics of spam to be blocked when the number of connections that are open with the sender exceeds a threshold number.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein the threshold number is configurable.

15 28. The method of claim 17 wherein blocking the electronic data comprises blocking future electronic data from the sender for at least a period of time when the electronic data is determined to have characteristics of a message to be blocked.

29. The method of claim 25 wherein determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of spam comprises:

20 counting a number of communications of electronic data that have been received from the sender during a period of time; and

determining that the electronic data has characteristics of spam to be blocked when the number of messages received from the sender exceeds a threshold number during the period of time.

25 30. The method of claim 29 wherein the period of time is configurable.

31. The method of claim 1 wherein identifying the sender includes identifying an initial source that generated the electronic data.

32. The method of claim 1 further comprising redirecting the received electronic data from the intended recipient to a computing device capable of performing at least the
5 identifying.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein redirecting the received electronic data comprises changing a destination address associated with the received electronic data from the intended recipient to the computing device.

34. A computer readable medium or propagated signal having embodied thereon a
10 computer program for communicating electronic data using a computer, the computer program comprising:

a receiving code segment for receiving electronic data at an intermediary located between a sender and an intended recipient of the electronic data;

an identifying code segment for identifying the sender;

15 a changing code segment for changing the electronic data to reflect information identifying the sender; and

a forwarding code segment for forwarding at least a selected portion of the changed electronic data to the intended recipient.

35. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the sender is not a host.

20 36. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the identifying code segment is configured to identify the sender based upon at least an Internet Protocol address.

37. The computer readable medium of claim 36 wherein the identifying code segment is configured to identify the sender based upon more than an Internet Protocol address.

38. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the identifying code segment is configured to identify the sender based upon at least a screen name.

39. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the identifying code segment is configured to identify the sender based upon at least account information.

5 40. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the identifying code segment is configured to identify the sender based upon at least information identifying a person.

41. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the intermediary comprises a layer 4 redirection program.

10 42. The computer readable medium of claim 41 wherein the identifying code segment is configured to identify the sender based upon a data packet.

43. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the identifying code segment comprises a layer 4 redirection program.

44. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the changing code segment comprises a layer 4 redirection program.

15 45. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein:
the identifying code segment comprises a first determining code segment for
determining an address from which the electronic data is received, wherein the address is
other than an Internet Protocol address, and a second determining code segment for
determining an identifier for the sender based on the address from which the electronic data
20 is received; and

the information includes the identifier such that the forwarding code segment includes
a code segment for forwarding the electronic data along with the identifier for the sender.

46. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the receiving code segment includes a code segment for receiving an electronic mail message.

47. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein:

the identifying code segment comprises: a first determining code segment for
5 determining at least an address from which the electronic data is received, and a second
determining code segment for determining an identifier for the sender based at least on the
address from which the electronic data is received; and

the information includes the identifier such that the forwarding code segment includes
a code segment for forwarding the electronic data along with the identifier for the sender.

10 48. The computer readable medium of claim 47 wherein the first determining code
segment includes a code segment for determining an Internet protocol address.

49. The computer readable medium of claim 47 wherein the second determining code
segment includes a code segment for determining a user-defined identifier based on the
address from which the electronic data is received.

15 50. The computer readable medium of claim 47 wherein the second determining code
segment includes a code segment for determining a screen name corresponding to the sender.

51. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein:

the changing code segment comprises an appending code segment for appending to
the electronic data the information identifying the sender; and

20 the forwarding code segment comprises a code segment for forwarding the electronic
data along with the appended information.

52. The computer readable medium of claim 51 wherein the appending code segment
includes a code segment for appending the information identifying the sender as a header to
the electronic data received.

53. The computer readable medium of claim 34 wherein the computer program further comprises:

a determining code segment for determining whether the electronic data received from the sender has characteristics of a message to be blocked; and

5 a blocking code segment for blocking the electronic data when the electronic data is determined to have characteristics of a message to be blocked,

wherein the forwarding code segment comprises a code segment for forwarding the changed electronic data that is not determined to have characteristics of a message to be blocked.

10 54. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein the determining code segment is a level 4 redirection program.

55. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein the determining code segment is configured to determine whether the electronic data has characteristics of a message to be blocked based upon a data packet.

15 56. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein the determining code segment is configured to determine whether the electronic data has characteristics of a message to be blocked based upon the identification of the sender.

57. The computer readable of claim 53 wherein the blocking code segment is a level 4 redirection program.

20 58. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein the blocking code segment is configured to block the electronic data based upon a data packet.

59. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein blocking the electronic data comprises blocking the electronic data based upon the identification of the sender.

60. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein the determining code segment comprises a code segment for determining whether the electronic data relates to undesirable news postings such that electronic data having characteristics of undesirable news postings is blocked.

5 61. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein the determining code segment comprises a code segment for determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of spam such that electronic data having characteristics of spam is blocked.

62. The computer readable medium of claim 61 wherein the code segment for determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of spam comprises:

10 a code segment for counting a number of connections that are open with the sender;
and

a code segment for determining that the electronic data has characteristics of spam to be blocked when the number of connections that are open with the sender exceed a threshold number.

15 63. The computer readable medium of claim 62 wherein the threshold number is configurable.

20 64. The computer readable medium of claim 53 wherein the blocking code segment comprises a code segment for blocking future electronic data from the sender for at least a period of time when the electronic data is determined to have characteristics of a message to be blocked.

65. The computer readable medium of claim 61 wherein the code segment for determining whether the electronic data has characteristics of spam comprises:

a code segment for counting a number of communications of electronic data that have been received from the sender during a period of time; and

a code segment for determining that the electronic data has characteristics of spam to be blocked when the number of messages received from the sender exceeds a threshold number during the period of time.

66. The computer readable medium of claim 65 wherein the threshold number is configurable.

67. The computer readable medium of claim 65 wherein the period of time is configurable.

68. The computer readable medium of claim 34 the computer program further comprising a redirecting code segment for redirecting the received electronic data from the intended recipient to a computing device capable of at least identifying the senders.

69. The computer readable medium of claim 68 wherein the redirecting code segment comprises a code segment for changing a destination address associated with the received electronic data from the intended recipient to the computing device.

70. A unit of electronic data comprising:
a content area including electronic information communicated by a sender and intended for a designated recipient; and
an identifier appended to the content area that identifies at least the sender, wherein the identifier includes information that renders the identity of the sender immediately recognizable to the designated recipient.

71. The electronic data unit of claim 70 wherein the identifier includes identifying information that is based on an address associated with the sender.

72. The electronic data unit of claim 70 wherein the identifier includes identifying information other than location information.

73. The electronic data unit of claim 70 wherein the identifier includes a screen name for the sender.

74. The electronic data unit of claim 70 wherein the identifier includes account information.